

*Books printed for Rich. Wilkin at the King's-
Head in St. Paul's Church-yard.*

MR. Harris's Sermon, Preach'd at the Cathedral-
Church of St. Paul, January the 3d. 1697. be-
ing the First of the Lecture for that Year, Founded
by the Honourable Robert Boyle, Esquire.

— His Remarks on some late Papers relating to
the Universal Deluge, and to the Natural History of
the Earth. In *Octavo*.

Dr. Woodward's Natural History of the Earth, in
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Christian Religion, against the Objections of all
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8


The *Notion* of a GOD,

Neither from
FEAR nor POLICY.

A
SERMON

Preach'd at the
CATHEDRAL-CHURCH of St. Paul,
March the 7th. 1698.

BEING
The Third of the LECTURE for that Year,
Founded by the Honourable Robert Boyle, Esq;



By JOHN HARRIS, M. A.
and Fellow of the ROYAL-SOCIETY.

L O N D O N,
Printed by J. L. for Richard Wilkin, at the
King's-Head in St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1698.

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FEAR NOR POLICY

SERMON

PREACHED AT THE
CATHEDRAL-CHURCH OF ST. PAUL

March the 7th 1698

7:50 AM

The Third of the Lectures for that Year
Founded by the Honorable Robert Boyle Esq.

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LONDON

Printed by J. L. for Richard Widdowes at the
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PSALM x. 4.

The Wicked, through the Pride of his Conscience, will not seek after God: neither is God in all his Thoughts.



IN my last Discourse on these words, I came to consider the *Third Particular* I had before observed in them; which was, The great Charge the Psalmist brings against the Wicked and Proud Person here spoken of, *viz. Wilful Atheism and Infidelity. He will not seek after God: and all his thoughts are, There is no God.* Under which I proposed to Consider and Refute the Atheist's Objections, against the Being of a God in general. And these I found might be reduced to these Two Heads:

I. That we can have no Idea of God.

II. That the Notion of Him, which is about in the World, owes its Original to the foolish Fears and Ignorance of some Men, and to the crafty Designs of others.

The former of these I have already refuted, and shewed that it is Groundless and Precarious in all its Parts.

I shall now therefore consider the Second Objection against the Being of a God in general, *viz. That the Notion of a Deity, which is so generally found among Mankind, owes its Original to the*

foolish

foolish Fears and Ignorance of some Men, and to the designing and crafty Figments of others.

And here I shall first give you the Sense of these kind of Writers on this Point: And then endeavour to shew you, how very weak and trivial their Arguments are, and how very far short they come of Disproving the Existence of a Deity.

And first I shall give you the full sense of this Objection, from the words of those that bring it; beginning with the Modern Writers, who, as you will find by and by, have little or nothing new, *but like Carriers Horses, follow one another in a Track, and because the first went wrong, all the rest will succeed him in the same Error; not considering, that he who comes behind, may take an advantage to avoid that Pit, which those that went before, are fallen into.* (as it is in the words of the Translator of (a) *Philostratus*.)

(a) Blount's
Life of Apol-
lon. p. 19.

But here it must be premised, That since these kind of Men do frequently disguise their true meaning; *It is not the bare Words only, but the Scope of a Writer, that giveth the true Light by which any Writing is to be interpreted,* (as Mr. *Hobbs* (b) very well observes:) yet this must be said for both him and the other Modern Atheistick Writers, That their Disguise is so very thin and superficial, that any one may easily see through it, and discover their true Meaning and Design: Nothing can be clearer, than that 'tis the great scope of the Author of *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*, to persuade the World, That the first Original of all Religion, was from Craft and Imposture, and that it was cultivated and carried on by the Cunning and Avarice of the Priests. And in his *Anima Mundi*, pag. 13, 14. he tells us, That
Super-

(b) *Leviath.*
p. 338.

Superstition (by which these kind of Writers always mean Religion in general) did certainly proceed from some Crafty and Designing Person, who observed what were the Inclinations of Mankind, and so adapted his Fictions accordingly: He pretended to have some extraordinary way revealed to him, from an Invisible Power, whereby he was able to instruct the People; and to put them into a way of being happy in a Future State. And in another place, he saith, (a) That *(a) Life of Apollon. p. 3.* Mankind being ill-natured, and unapt to oblige others without Reward, as also judging of God Almighty by themselves, did at first conceive the Gods to be like their Eastern Princes, before whom no Man might come empty-handed; and thus came the Original of Sacrifices: And this Institution, he saith, was improved by the crafty Sacerdotal Order, into all that costly and extravagant Superstition that did afterwards so abound in the World. Now in this passage, 'tis plain, that he makes all the Jewish Religion to be nothing but Priest-craft and Imposture; tho' on wretched poor grounds, as I shall hereafter sufficiently make appear. And his Opinion of the Christian Religion, may easily be guessed, by what he delivers, *Anim. Mund. pag. 124.* viz. That most Christian Churches, like the Musk-melon from the Dunghill, were raised from the filthy Corruption and Superstition of Paganism. And in another place, he saith, (b) That he will engage to make appear, That a Temporal Interest was the great Machine on which all Humane Actions ever moved; (he means, in the Establishing of the Jewish and Christian Religions;) and that the common Pretence of Piety and Religion, was but like Grace before a Meal: i. e. according to him, nothing but a meer customary piece

(b) Oracles of Reason, p. 158.

(c) *Blount's*
Life of Apollon.
in the Preface,
and p. 24.

piece of Folly that signifies nothing at all, and which he frequently ridicules and exposes (c).

Now all this, though not in plain and express words, yet in the most obvious sense and meaning, is equally applicable to the Notion of a God; and no doubt was so intended by the Author. And, indeed, take away Religion and the Notion of a God must of course follow: For 'tis impossible to think that if there be a God, he should not expect Veneration and Worship from those Creatures of his, that he hath rendred capable of doing it; which therefore is their reasonable Service, Rom. 12. 1.

(a) *Causa, à qua Superstitio oritur, conservatur & fovetur, metus est.*
Tract. Theol. Polit. in Praef.

After the same manner doth Spinoza declare himself as to the Origin of Religion; which he also calls by the Name of Superstition. (a) He tells us, *That the true Cause from whence Superstition took its rise, is preserved and maintained, is Fear.* (b) *That if all things would but succeed according to Mens Minds, they would never be enslaved by Superstition: But because they are often in great streights, and so put to it, that no Counsel or Help will be beneficial to them, they are tossed and bandied about between Hope and Fear, and at last have their Mind so debilitated, that they are prone to believe any thing.* (c) *But that in reality all those things which have been the Objects of Mens vain Religious Worship, are nothing but the dreadful Phantasms and mad Figments of a sorrowful and timorous Mind.* (d) *And the*

(b) *Si Homines res omnes suas certo consilio regere possent, vel si fortuna ipsis prospera semper foret; nulla superstitione tenerentur: sed quoniam eò saepe angustiarum rediguntur ut consilium nullum ad ferre queant, inter spem metumque miscere fluctuant, ideo animum ut plurimum, ad quidvis credendum pronissimum habent.* *Ibid.*

(c) *Ea omnia quae Homines inquam vanâ Religione colunt, nihil præter Phantasmatum, animiq; trillium & timidum fuisse deliria.* *Ibid.*

(d) *Ex hac itaq; Superstitionis Causâ (sc. metu) clarè sequitur omnes homines naturâ superstitioni esse obnoxios: quicquid dicant alii, qui putant hoc inde oriri, quod omnes mortales confusam quandam Numinis Idæam habent.* *Ibid.*

reason

reason (he saith) why all Men are thus subject by Nature to Superstition, is only from Fear; and not as some have fantasied, from any confused Idea of a God, which they will have to be impressed on all Mankind.

The Author of the *Leviathan*, speaks yet a little plainer as to this Point; (e) Ignorant Men (saith he) (e) *Leviath.* feign to themselves several kinds of Invisible Powers, P. 51. stand in awe of their own Imaginations, in time of Distress invoke them, in time of Success give them thanks, making the Creatures of their own fancy Gods. This is the Natural Seed of Religion, which Men taking notice of, have formed into Laws, &c.

And he tells us in another place, (f) That Fear (f) *Leviath.* of Power invisible feigned by the Mind, or imagined P. 26. 51. from Tales publickly allowed is Religion, not allowed, is Superstition. So that according to Mr. Hobbs, Religion and Superstition differ only in this, that the latter is a Lye and a Cheat standing only on the Authority of Private Men, whereas the former is supported by the Power of the Government. In these Four Things, saith he, elsewhere, (a) consists (a) *Leviath.* the Natural Seed of Religion, viz. Ignorance of Second P. 54. Causes, Opinion of Ghosts, Devotion toward what Men Fear, and taking things casual for Prognosticks. These are the Accounts which our Modern Atheistical Writers give of the Origin of Religion, and the Notion of a God among Men. And this they, with great assurance, put off as their own new Invention; without being so just as to mention any of the Ancients, from whom they have borrowed every Article of it. That trite Passage every Body knows *Primus in orbe Deos fecit timor*; and *Lucretius* mentions Fear and the Ignorance of Second Causes, as that

that which gave the first rise to the Notion of a

(b) *Cetera, quæ fieri in Terris Cæloq; tuentur
Mortales, pavidis cum pendunt mentibus sæpi
Efficiunt Animos humiles formidine Divum,
Depressosque premunt ad Terram; propterea quid
Agnorantia Causarum conferre Deorum
Cogit ad Imperium Res, & concedere Regnum: Et
Quorum operum causas nulla ratione videre
Possunt, hæc fieri Divino numine rentur.*

Lib. 6. v. 49.

God: For, saith he,
(b) *When Men with fear-
ful Minds behold the
things in the Earth and
Heavens, they become
abject and depressed un-
der the fear of the
Gods; whose Empire Ig-
norance of Causes sets up*

*in the World: for when Men cannot see any natural
Reason for any Effect, they strait fancies 'tis the Pro-
duct of some Divine Power. The very same thing
he saith also in another place, (c) where he attri-
butes likewise the Notion of Ghosts, and conse-
quently of the Gods interfering with the Affairs of
the World, to Mens not being able to distinguish
Dreams from Real Appearances. Tully tells us, That
there were some in his time, and no doubt long be-
fore, who attributed the Opinion and Belief of the*

(c) Lib. 5.
v. 1160. *Nunc
quæ causa De-
um, &c.*

(d) *Si qui dixerunt totam de Diis immorta-
libus opinionem fictam esse ab hominibus sapientibus
Reipublicæ causâ.*

(e) *Θεὸς δὲ πρῶτον ἔστι τιχην, ἡ φύσις ἀλλὰ
πρὶν νόμοις καὶ τέτοις ἄλλοις ἄλλοις ἐπιβύσθαι οὐνο-
μολόγηται νομοθεσίαν.* Plato de Legib. lib. 10.

*the Gods were not by Nature, but by Art and Law only,
and so were different in different places, according to the
different humour of the Law givers, chanced to determine
the Matter.* Sextus Empiricus saith, That there were

(f) *— πρῶτον δὲ ἀνθρώπων περὶ θεῶν καὶ τὸ συμ-
φύειν τῷ βίῳ σαφὲς οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν ὅστις ἀναγκα-
σιον ἔστι πρὶν τῶν Θεῶν ὑπονοεῖν, καὶ ἡ δὲ αἰτία ἐστὶν
μυθολογία δόξα.* Sext. Emp. adv. Math. p. 310.

*And Plato acquaints us,
(e) That the ancient A-
theists did affirm, that
at first some Intelligent
and Prudent Men (f)
who consider'd what would
be*

be beneficial to Humane Life ; and these first feigned the fabulous Notion of Gods, and caused that Suspicion that there is in Mens Minds about them. Afterwards he saith, That heretofore Men lived wild and savage, and preyed upon one another like wild Beasts ; till some Men being willing to prevent and repress Injuries and Rapine, invented Laws to punish those that did amiss : And then they feigned, that there were Gods also, who took cognizance of all Mens Actions, whether good or bad ; that so no one might dare to commit any secret Wickedness, when he was by this means persuaded,

Ἠλεγ' ἱσαμύχοι, πᾶν ἐστὶν εὐνοίας ἐπὶ αἶαν
Ἀνθρώπων, ὅς τις τε καὶ εὐνομίας ἐφορῶντες,

That the Gods, tho' unseen by Men, did yet inspect into all Humane Actions, and take notice who did well, and who the contrary. Sextus also attributes the Rise of Mens Belief of a God, to their ignorance of Second Causes, (as I shewed you before that *Lucretius* doth :) for he makes *Democritus* speak thus, (a) When Men of old saw strange and frightful things in the Air or Heavens, such as Thunder, Lightning, Thunderbolts, Eclipses of the Sun and Moon, &c. not knowing the Natural Causes of them, but being terrified by them, they strait imagined the Gods to be the Authors of them. This therefore being proved to be the true sence of the Ancient Atheistical Writers, and from them copied by the Moderns, viz. That Fear, Ignorance and Cunning were the first Originals or Causes of the Notion and Belief of a God. Let us now fairly examine the Case, and see what ground there is for such an Assertion ; and whether this can account for that Universal Notion of a Divine

(a) Ὁρῶντες τὰ ἐν τοῖς μα-
κρῶντι παθήματα οἱ παλαιὸι
ἄνθρωποι, καὶ δάκρυ βροτῆς
καὶ ἀστραπῆς, καὶ κεραυνῶν, ἡδὲ
καὶ σελήνης ἐκλείψεις ἰδόν-
τες, οὐκ οἶσάντων τούτων
αἰτίας.

and Omnipotent Being, which we find every where in the World. And,

1. I say, That the *Notion* of a GOD, could not come from *Fear*; for if it did, either this Fear must be universally inherent in all Mankind, or else peculiar only to some Dastardly and Low-spirited Mortals. If the former be asserted, 'tis a very convincing Argument, that there is a just ground for such a Fear; and that it hath something that is Real for its Object, that can thus affect all Men, after the same manner. And if it be so, that all Men are naturally subject to this Fear of a Deity; how could any one ever discover, that there was no real ground for this, in the nature of the thing? how came he himself exempted from this poorness of Spirit? And if he were not exempted from this terrible Passion, how came he to discover, that the Object of this Fear is all a Cheat, and nothing but a meer *Mormo* and Bugbear? 'Twas very lucky for him, that the rambling Atoms of his Constitution jump'd by chance into such a courageous and noble Frame and Temper! But pray who was this mighty Man? when and where did he live? what Ancient History gives us any Account of this happy Person, that laughed at *that* which all the World besides were afraid of? Let the Atheists give us but any Relation of him, that is Authentick, and it shall be allowed as the greatest thing they have ever yet advanced. But I suppose they will not say that this Fear is Universal; but that it only possesseth mean and abject Spirits, and never invades the *Great* and *Brave Soul*. Let us see whether this will do them any service. Now by *Brave* and *Great Souls*, who do they mean? Do they intend

tend by them, such as have Power, Command and Empire over others? Nothing is more certain, than that Kings and Princes have been equally subject to these Fears of a God, and of Divine Punishment, with the meanest and most contemptible of their Subjects.

And this (a) *Lucretius* himself owns, (as also that this Fear of a Deity is Universal) and we have Examples of it in the Histories of all Ages and Parts of the World. But they

(a) *Præterea, cui non animus formidine Divum
Contrahitur? cui non contrepunt membra pavore
Fulminis horribili cum plaga torrida tellus
Contremunt, & magnum percurrunt murmura Cælum?
Non Populi Gentesque tremunt? Regesque superbi
Conripunt Divum percussâ membra timore
Ne quod ob admissum sædæ, dictumque superbo
Pœnarum grave sit solvendi tempus adactum?*

Lucret. l. 5. v. 1217.

will say, 'tis like, that by *Brave and Great Souls*, they don't mean Kings and Princes, but the Wise, Knowing, and Learned part of Mankind: These were they that first discovered this Cheat, and who, finding its Advantage to Mankind, have ever since continued it and carried it on for the Publick Good. These Cunning Men finding the Vulgar generally subject to dismal Apprehensions and Fears of they knew not what kind of Invisible Powers, took advantage from thence to tell them of a God, and to form the product of their Fears into the Notion of a Deity. Now to this I say, That if these cunning Politicians found that there was a Fear, Dread and Apprehension of some Divine and Almighty Being, Universally impressed upon the Minds of Men, as no doubt but there is; this, I say, is a very convincing Argument that such a Belief hath a good Foundation in the Nature of the thing, and consequently hath Truth at the bottom. And therefore 'tis plain, that these

Men did not *Invent*, but *find* this Notion and Belief actually Existing, by a kind of *Anticipation* in the Hearts of all Mankind. And that they could not possibly invent it, had there been no Ground nor Reason for such a Belief, I shall plainly prove by and by.

But again ; That the Notion of a *God*, did not arise only from *Fear*, is plain from hence ; That Mankind hath gotten an Idea of Him, that could never proceed only from *that Passion*. If *Fear* only were to make a *God*, it would compose him of nothing but black and terrible Idea's : it would represent Him to be *πᾶν φθονεὶν καὶ ταρχνῆδες*, *all envious and spiteful* ; a grim, angry and vindictive Being ; one that delights in nothing but to exercise his Tyrannical Power and Cruelty upon Mankind : we should then believe him to be such a Power as the *Indians* do their *Evil God*, and we do the Devil ; a mischievous and bloody Deity, that is the Author of nothing but Evil and Misery in the World : for these must be the dreadful Attributes of a Being which *Fear* only would create and set up in our Hearts.

But now, instead of this, we find a quite different Notion of God in the World. We justly believe Him to be a most Kind, Loving and Gracious Being, and *whose mercies are over all his works*. We are taught by the Scriptures, those Sacred Volumes of his Will, to believe that He at first Created the World, and all things that are therein, to display his Goodness and Kindness to his Creatures : That *he wills not, nor delights in the death of a sinner*, nor in the evil and misery of any thing ; but that He hath by most admirable methods of Divine Love, provided for our
Happi-

Happiness both here and hereafter. Now such an Account as this of the Deity, could never take its Rise from *Fear* only: And therefore since it cannot be denied but that we have such a Notion of God, it must have some more Noble and Generous an Original. We find, indeed, in our selves a just Fear and Dread of Offending so Good and Gracious a God; and we believe it suitable to his Justice, to punish those that will pertinaciously continue in a state of Rebellion against Him, after having refused and slighted the repeated Overtures of his Mercy. But then we know very well, That the Notion we have of a Deity, is not occasioned by, and derived from this *Fear*; but, on the contrary, this *Fear* from it. 'Tis the Natural Consequence and Effect of the Belief and Knowledge of a God, but it cannot be the Cause and Original of it. For Fear alone can never dispose the Mind of Man to imagine a Being that is infinitely Kind, Merciful and Gracious. The Atheist therefore must here take in *Hope* too, as well as *Fear*, as a joint Cause of his pretended Origin of the Belief of a God; and say, That Mankind came to imagine that there was some Powerful and Invisible Being, which they *hoped* would do them as much good, as they were afraid it would do them hurt (a). But these two contrary Ideas, like Equal Quantities in an Equation with contrary Signs, will destroy one another, and consequently the Remainder will be nothing. And therefore the Mind of Man must lay aside such an Idea of God, as soon as he hath well considered it, for it will signify just nothing at all.

Another very good Argument, That the *Notion* of a God, did not take its first Original from *Fear* only, may be

(a) Vid. Archbishop Tillotson's First Sermon, p. 47.

be drawn from hence, That those that do believe and know most of God, are the least Subject to that servile Passion. If Fear only occasioned Mens Notion and Belief of a God, the consequence must be, that where the Notion of a Deity is most strong and vivid, there Men must be most timorous and apprehensive of Danger; there the greatest distrust, suspicion, and anxious sollicitousness about the Events of Futurity would be always found. But this is so far from being true in Fact, that no one is so free from those Melancholy and Dreadful Thoughts and Apprehensions, as he that truly believes in, and Fears God. For he can find always in Him Almighty Defence and Protection; *he can cast all his care on God who he knows careth for him*: When all the treacherous Comforts of this World leave him, and when nothing but a gloomy Scene of Affliction, Distress and Misery presents its self here; yea, even when Heart it self and Strength begin to fail, *God will be (he knows) the Strength of his Heart and his Portion for ever*; and even in the vast Multitude of his Afflictions, *God's Comforts will refresh his Soul*.

But 'tis far otherwise with the miserable Wretch that hath no Belief of, nor any Knowledge of God; if he fall into Affliction, Trouble, or Misery, he hath nothing to support him: He is the most abject and dispirited of all Mankind, *his whole head is sick, and his heart is faint, and his Spirit cannot sustain his Infirmary*; for he hath not only no Power and Ability to bear the present load of Misery, but he expects yet much worse to come; and notwithstanding all his former Incredulity and Bravery, he now, as the Devil himself doth, *believes and trembles*. And there-

therefore, though as *Plutarch* observes, *Τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ μὴ νομίζω Οὐδὲ, μὴ φοβέσθαι*, it be the chief Design of *Atheism* to give Men an Exemption from Fear; yet 'tis a very foolish one, and falls very far short of answering its End: for it deserts and fails its Votaries in their greatest Extremities and Necessities, and by depriving them of all just Grounds for hope, must needs expose them to the most dismal Invasions of Fear. And thus, I think, it is very plain, That the Notion of a God could not take its first Original from Fear. As to the Ignorance of Second Causes, which is sometimes alledged as another Occasion of the Notion of a Deity; the Modern Atheists do not much insist upon it, and therefore I need not do so in its Refutation. I have shewed already whence they had it; and I think it sufficient to observe here, that there are no Men so Ignorant of Second Causes, nor any that give so poor and trifling Accounts of the *Phænomena* of Nature as these Atheistical Philosophers do. And therefore Ignorance ought rather to be reckoned among the Causes of *Atheism* and *Infidelity*, than of the Idea of God and Religion; for I am very well assured that a through insight into the Works of Nature, and a serious Contemplation of that admirable Wisdom, excellent Order, and that useful Aptitude and Relation that the several Parts of the World have to each other, must needs convince any one, that they are the Products of a Divine and Almighty Power. *The Invisible things of God may be understood by the things that are made, and his Eternal Power and Godhead discovered by this means* (a); as hath been excellently demonstrated by the learned (a) *Rom. I. 20.* Dr. *Cudworth*, Dr. *Bentley*, Mr. *Ray*, and many others.

And

And these kind of Gentlemen have betrayed their shallow and superficial Knowledge of things, by nothing more, than by pretending to give an Account of the Original of the World, the Motion of the Heavenly Bodies, of Gravity, and several other *Phænomena* of Nature, without having recourse to a Deity; as I shall hereafter more particularly observe. But I now hasten to Refute that which they make their Great and most Common Objection against the Being of a God; And to shew,

2. That the Notion of a God did not, nor could not, arise from Cunning and Contrivance; and that it was not invented by any Crafty and Politick Person.

Though that it did do so, is the constant Assertion of these Gentlemen; and they do it with as much assurance, as if it were a Self-evident Proposition. In all Companies they will nauseously tire you with this Battology, over and over again, That *All Religion is a Cheat, and the greatest Cheat of all is Religion*. But this themselves have happily discovered; and therefore they Scorn to be imposed upon by Priest-craft; they will neither be ridden by Priests, nor lead by them; they can go without Leading-strings; and won't be put to the Temporal Charge of a Spiritual Guide: and they have quitted the Thoughts of going to Heaven by the same means as they go to the Play-house, (i.e.) by giving Money to the Door-keepers. As the Translator of *Philostratus* insolently expresses it. (a) Now after all this bold and repeated Exclamation against Priest-Craft and Holy Shams, &c. Would not one think that they had some demonstrative Ground, to prove that the Notion of God, and

(a) Blount's
Life of Apollon.
in the Preface.

and Religion is all a Cheat and Imposture? Would not one suppose that they could name the very Person that first Invented this *Fourbe*; tell us when, and where he lived, and plainly prove by what means he came to impose so grossly on Mankind, and how they came to be such Fools as to take it, and dully to submit to it ever since? Nothing sure, that is less than a *direct Demonstration*, ought to protect a Man under so rude a Liberty as these Gentlemen take, of ridiculing all the Sacred Laws of God and Men. But have they any such Proof ready? or have they ever yet produced it? No, nor is it possible they ever should; as appears plainly from the Ancient Histories of all Nations in the World. In no one of these do we ever find the least mention made of any one that Invented the Notion of a God. 'Twas a Thing taken for Granted by all the Ancient Law-givers, that there was a God: This they never went about to prove; nor had they any need so to do, or to feign it, for they found it universally and naturally stamp'd upon the Minds of Mankind. This *Moses* himself doth not so much as attempt to teach the *Jews*, as knowing very well that it was what they had a general Notion and Idea of before. And *Homer* speaks every where of the Gods, as of Beings universally known and believed, and never goes about to prove their Existence. The same thing appears in *Hesiod*, and in the Fragments that we have of all the Ancient Greek Poets. And though it be not true in Fact, yet 'tis a good Argument *ad Hominem* against the Atheists, that *Lucretius* pretends to tell you when Atheism began, and who was the first Bold Man that disputed and denied the Being of a

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God.

(a) *Primum Graius homo mortales tollere contra
Est oculos ausus, primusq; obistere contra:
Quem nec fama Deum, nec fulmina nec minitanti
Murmure compressit Caelum.*—Lib. 1. v. 67.

God. This, he saith, was *Epicurus*. (a) But he cannot deny but that in so doing, *Epicurus*

contradicted the common Sentiments of all Mankind, and broke through those Fears and Obligations that the generality of Men were under to a Divine Power. But to Refute a little more Methodically this trite Objection. I say, that the Notion of a God could not derive its Original from the cunning Invention of any Politick Person, for these Reasons:

1. Because the pretended Inventor himself could never possibly have come by such a Notion, had there been no such Being as a God. *Sextus Empiricus* observes very

(b) — οὐδὲν ὅτι νομίζουσι τῆς ἐπινοίας τῆς ἀνθρώπων ἢ τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶναι, καὶ οὐδὲν ὅτι τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτοῦ δεξιῶν (ἐκείνου) ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ πόθεν εἰ οἱ νομίζουσι, μὴδὲ πῶς οἱ νομίζουσι αὐτοῖς Θεοῖς, ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ εἶναι Θεοῦ; ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ μὴ ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἡμετέρων, ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ μὴ.

Adv. Math. p. 314.

well, That though (b) 'tis pretended that Lawgivers and Politicians invented the Notion of a God; yet the Asserters of it are not aware

of an Absurdity that arises thence: for if it should be asked, how they themselves came by such a Notion? they must be at a loss; they will not say they had it from others, nor can they account how they came by it; and therefore it must have been from the beginning; and so all Men must have a Notion of God, though not all after the same way. And, indeed, 'tis not possible to imagine that such a Notion could ever have come into any one's Head; had there been no such Being as a Deity. Were he an absolute Non-entity, and really Nothing at all, 'tis unconceivable how any one could ever attain an Idea of God, or have coined

coined any word that should so have expressed that Idea, as to render it intelligible to any one else. The Mind of Man cannot invent, or make any new simple Idea or Cogitation; it cannot possibly make a Positive Conception of that which is really nothing at all. Which way soever we come by our Idea's, we cannot have one of what is absolutely a Non-entity; for what is absolutely Nothing, can neither come into us by *our Senses*, nor be *innate* in our Minds. And therefore if there were no God, we could never have had any Idea of Him, nor could any one ever possibly invent, or frame such a Notion in his Mind. I know the *compounding, ampliating and feigning Power* of the Mind will here be alledged; and it will be said that we may by that means frame Notions of things which perhaps did never, nor ever will Exist: Thus we may gain the Notion of a Flying Horse, of a Creature, half a Man and half a Horse, a Man of a Thousand Foot high, &c. and therefore say they, (a) why might not the Mind of Man, by this compounding and ampliating Power, feign as well the Notion of a Deity? To which I answer, That this Power in our Minds doth not, nor cannot extend so far. All that we can do by it, is to connect together two or more possible and consistent Idea's, or to Ampliate or Enlarge any one or more of them, in point of *Time, Extent, &c.* Thus, as was before said, by connecting the Idea's of Wings and a Horse, or of a Horse and a Man, we may feign a *Pegasus* or a *Centiure*; and I can imagine either of these Creatures, or any other, to live Five Thousand times as long, or to be Fifty

(a) *Sext. Empiric. Adv. Mathem. p. 316, 317.*

thousand times as big, as is usual. But all this is still short of what 'tis brought for, and will give no account at all of the Invention of the Idea of a God. For suppose the Mind would endeavour to amplify the Idea of a Man into that of God, which is the Way *Sextus Empiricus* says Men might and did come by the Notion of a Deity. (b) First, he saith, the Mind can give him Eternity of Duration : But how came it by that Idea of Eternity ? was that Idea previous to the Invention of a Deity ? and had Mankind a clear Conception of it ? if they had, the Notion of God could not be then invented, for *one* of his chiefest Attributes was known before. But I suppose they will say that the Notion of Eternity was gained by *Ampliating* the Idea of Duration or Time beyond the common and ordinary Term : And thus by imagining a Man to live a Thousand or Ten Thousand Years, I may come to frame the Notion of a Being that should always exist. But that is a gross Mistake ; for a Being that should endure Ten Thousand, or Ten Millions of Years, is not therefore exempt from dying at last, any more than one that endures but Ten Minutes. Had I not in my Mind *before* a clear Idea of Eternity, I could no more by this Ampliating Power gain a Notion of an Eternal Being, than I could believe my self to be Eternal ; for every thing about me would contradict that Notion ; and 'tis very strange that I should come to believe any Being could have an Eternal Duration from considering of things that are all perishable and mortal.

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That which leads Men into this mistake, is, I suppose this : We have all of us a Notion of a Being, Perfect or Eternal, as to his Duration, because there is such a Being in Reality : And therefore, whenever we go about to consider of Time, or of the Period or Term of the Duration of a Being, we can amplify it so, as to suppose it shall never cease to be, but have its Being still continued on without end : That is, we can connect the Idea that we have of Eternity with a Being, and so render it Eternal. But this could never be done, if there were *no Idea* of Eternity at all, if there were nothing Eternal, if there were no God. The case is the same as to all the other *Perfections* of the Divine Nature. We have clear *Idea's* and *Notions* of them in our Minds ; and therefore we can talk about them, and be understood : because there are real *Idea's* that answer to those words that we use ; and something really existing, that answers to those *Idea's*. But were there no such Being, nor any thing Real in Nature, to deduce our *Idea's* from, were there no God, 'tis impossible there could be any such *Idea's* at all.

But however, this Assertion, That the Mind of Man was able to Invent the Notion of a Deity, and communicate it to the World, is a most flat and palpable Contradiction to what the Atheist at other times urges, and that too, as founded on Principles that he is very fond of. In my last Discourse, I shewed you, That he objected against the Being of a God, from our not being able to have any *Idea* of Him ; and this he endeavours to support, by asserting also, That we have *no Knowledge but Sense*, and that *all our Conceptions are Passive*.

Passive. Now both these are absolutely inconsistent with the Original that he is now attributing to the Notion of a God. For if it be true, as he saith it is, That we can have no Idea of God; 'tis very strange to suppose, that a Politick Man should Invent, and the World Receive the Idea or Notion of That which 'tis impossible for any one to invent, or receive. 'Tis a little odd, that a Man should first cunningly devise he knew not what, and then the affrighted World believe they knew not what; and that we should prove and assert, and the Atheist ridicule and deny the Existence of That, which we do none of us all know any thing about! But so it must be, according to the Atheist's Uniform Scheme of Things.

Again, If, as he asserts, *all our Conceptions be Passive*, and *all our Knowledge; Sense*: which way could this Cunning Inventer of a God, come by his Notion or Idea of Him? how could his Mind attain any such *seigning* and *ampliating* Power? For according to the Atheist's Principles, the Mind could have no Active, much less Spontaneous Power at all; but all our Idea's and Conceptions would be meer necessary Motions, mechanically occasioned by the Impressions of External Objects. So that as *Protagoras* tells us (in *Plato's Theætet.*) Οὔτε γὰρ τὰ μὴ ὄντα δυνατόν δοξάζειν, ἔτε ἄλλα παρ' αὐτὴν πάσχει: *'Tis neither possible to conceive that which is not, nor indeed any thing else, but only just as our Mind suffers it by Impressions from without.* And therefore no Man could ever possibly Invent any thing at all, nor have any Power within him of putting or joining together two or more simple idea's, or of ampliating or enlarging any Idea or Notion at all; much less could he grow to very

very subtle as to Invent the Notion of a Deity. And as no Law-giver nor Politician could, we see, have Invented the Notion of a Deity, if he had had a mind so to do; so it appears very weak and foolish in him to do it, if he could. For while there was no Belief among Men, of any Divine and Almighty Power, he would have been a mortal God himself, (a) ^{(a) *Leviathan*, p. 87.} as *Hobbs* calls the Commonwealth: His Will would have been his Law; and Men's Obedience to Him, would have been founded in the Fear they were under of his great Power. And this, according to the Atheistical Principles, would have been a much better Stay and Support to his Authority, than the idle Obligations of Conscience and Religion. For the aforesaid Author tells us, (b) ^{(b) *Ib.* p. 7.} That if the Fear of Spirits (i. e. of a God) were taken away, Men would be much better fitted for Civil Obedience. And in another place he goes a little further yet, and saith, (c) ^{(c) *Ib.* p. 238.} That 'tis impossible any Government can stand, where any other than the Sovereign hath a Power of giving greater Rewards than Life, and greater Punishments than Death. That is, where there is any Obligation on Mens Minds to a Divine and Almighty Power: which they will chuse to obey, rather than the Unlawful Commands of an Arbitrary Prince, that can only kill the Body. Now there is no doubt but that this is true of such a Power or Government, as that he calculated his *Leviathan* for; i. e. One absolutely Arbitrary and Tyrannical. And all Power must be so, if there be no God, and no Antecedent Good and Evil, but what the Will of the Sovereign shall make so, as Mr. *Hobbs* positively asserts there is not. Therefore that Man must act very unwisely, who when he

was

was possessed of Power enough to give Laws to, and govern others by his sole Will and Pleasure, would ever invent the Notion of a God and Religion. For this was the direct way to cramp himself in his Power, to tie up his own Hands, and to let the People see that he himself is accountable to God, as well as they; 'tis to teach them, that the Power he hath, is but a Trust committed to him by God, which he is to discharge for his Subjects Good and Advantage, and not only to gratifie his own Will and Humour. And this Notion might induce the Subjects of an Arbitrary and Tyrannical Prince, to ease him of the Trouble of a Government, that they perceived involved him in a great deal of *Guilt*, and would proportionably encrease the Account that he must one day give of his Stewardship. But,

2. As the Idea and Notion of a God, cannot possibly have been invented by any one; so neither could it have been understood or believed by Mankind, if it had been so. Had there been only one Person that had coined the Idea of a God, and no manner of Notion at all of any of his Attributes or Perfections previous to this, in the Minds of Men; what would it have signified, to tell them, that there was a God? how could they understand the meaning of a meer Arbitrary word, that had no manner of foundation in Nature, nor any Idea or Notion answering to it? *Words are but Marks of Things*, or *Signs* to know them or distinguish them by: and therefore a Word that is the Sign of what is absolutely Nothing, or a Non-Entity, must needs be nonsense and unintelligible. And consequently, he that should attempt to awe Mankind with an empty Sound, that had no
Sign-

Signification, would certainly be exposed to contempt ; and instead of affrighting others, would only be laughed at himself. The Author of *Anima Mundi*, saith, (a) *That to tell a Prophane Rabble of an* (a) Pag. 36. *Invisible Deity, and of a Future State of Rewards and Punishments, will signifie nothing at all : and, That Men will not for such Metaphysicks, forbear any manner of Pleasure or Profit, how base soever.* How then could the Figment of a Deity gain admittance into the Minds of Men, at first ? What would it signifie to tell Men of an Invisible Power, that presides over, and governs the World ; when (according to the Atheist's Supposition) they had no manner of Notion of any such Being *before*, and consequently could not know what was meant by such Words and Expressions. Should you tell them, indeed, of a potent Neighbour, that was coming strongly armed, to take away their Life or Goods, they would look about them, and endeavour, by flight or force, to secure themselves. But to tell them of a Power that they never saw nor heard any thing of before, and which they are told withal, is *impossible* to be seen or heard, or any way rendred an Object of their Senses, could make no impression at all on Mankind : or suppose that it could make some impression, and frighten some Men at its first proposal, how long would this last ? No longer, at farthest, than till they were by Experience convinced that it was false and precarious, and that there was no Ground nor Reason to believe any such thing. And this they must arrive at in a small time, if the Thing were false. 'Tis impossible such a Cheat as this, which it would have concerned every one to have examined,

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could

could long have maintained its Ground. Time discovers, and certainly lays open all impostures; and that the sooner, the more are concerned to enquire into it. And therefore had this Notion and Belief of a Deity had no other Original and Foundation than what the Atheists pretend, 'tis impossible it could have continued so long in the World; and much more so, that it should have gained ground as we know it hath continually done, and be established on better Principles, the more it hath been considered and understood. *Opinionum commenta delet dies, naturæ judicia confirmat*; saith Cicero. Besides, It cannot well be imagined that any Man should have the vanity to believe, that a thing which he knew he had invented himself, and which had no manner of ground nor foundation to support it from the Nature of the thing, could ever impose upon and delude Mankind, or indeed find any admittance in their Belief. He must needs think that others would be as sagacious to discover the Cheat, as he could be to contrive it; and that among so many Heads, some one would soon detect the Forgery of what must necessarily appear false and precarious to the common Sense and Reason of all Men. But,

3dly, and lastly, The Universality of the Notion and Belief of a God, is also a most demonstrative Argument, that it could not arise from the Invention of any Cunning and Designing Person. That there is such an Universal Notion of a Deity, cannot, I think, be denied by any one; and I doubt not but farther Discoveries will satisfy us, that there is a Notion of God even among those Barbarous and Savage People that are said to have no manner of Idea of Him, by
a late

a late Ingenious Author. But supposing that it were so, that the Knowledge of a God were quite lost, in three or four dark and uncultivated parts of the Earth, whose Inhabitants are so brutish, as scarce to think at all: this is no more an Argument against the Belief of God's being Universally diffused throughout the World, than *Monsters* and *Fools* are, that Men have not generally a *Humane Shape* and *Reason*. There are some Anomalies, Irregularities and Exceptions in all Things and Cases, which yet are not by any accounted of force enough to over-turn a general Rule. I shall not say much to this Point, it having been so largely and frequently handled already; only I cannot omit the Testimony of some of the Ancient Writers, who are very express, that there is an Universal Notion of a God among Mankind, and which they looked upon to be Natural, or by way of Anticipation. *There*

is, saith Cicero, (a) a Notion of a God impressed on the Minds of all Men. And in another place, saith he, *(b) What kind of Nation or People is there any where to be found, who have not, without learn-*

ing it from others, a Prolepsis or Anticipation of a Deity. And in two other places, he tells us, *(c) That there is no Nation so barbarous and wild, who do not acknowledge the Being of a God, and some how or other revere and worship him.* Seneca, in his *Epistles*, *(d)* frequently saith the same thing. *Sextus Empiricus* owns also, *(e) That all Men have a common Notion of*

(a) In omnium Animis Deorum Notionem natura ipsa impressit. De Nat. Deorum, lib. 1.

(b) Qua Gens est, aut quod Genus Hominum, quod non habeat sine Doctrina, anticipationem quandam Deorum, quam appellat προληψιν Epicurus. Ib. c. 32.

(c) Tuscul. Quæst. l. 1. De Legib. l. 1.

(d) Vid. Epist. 117, 118. De Benefic. 4. 4.

(e) Καὶ οὗτοί γε πάντες ἀνθρώποι καὶ θεῶν, καὶ τῶν μαρτυρῶν τῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, καὶ ἀποδυνάστευτον τὸ πνεῦμα

καὶ οὐδ' αὖτις ἀνθρώποι καὶ θεῶν, καὶ τῶν μαρτυρῶν τῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, καὶ ἀποδυνάστευτον τὸ πνεῦμα

God, by way of Prolepsis ; and believe Him to be a most Blessed and Happy Being, Incorruptible, Immortal, and incapable of any kind of Evil. And he concludes, That 'tis unreasonable to assert, that all Men should come to attribute the same

Τελὸς ὃ ἔστιν ἄλογον, τὸ καὶ πᾶσι
πάντα τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἐπιβάλλειν ἰδιώμασιν,
ἀλλὰ μὴ φυσικῶς ὅπως ἐκκυνεύει. Adv.
Mathem. p. 314.

Properties to God by Chance, and not rather be induced thereunto by the Dictates of Nature. Maximus Tyrius hath a very plain Passage, to prove this common No-

(f) Ἐν τοσούτῳ ὃ πολέμῳ καὶ εἰσεσι
καὶ διαφωνίᾳ, ἵνα ἴδῃς ὅτι ἐν πάσῃ γῇ
ὁ μὲν ἄνθρωπος λόγον καὶ νόμον, ὃν Θεὸς οἷος
πάντων βασιλεὺς καὶ πατὴρ — τὴν δὲ
ὁ Ἕλληνας λέγει καὶ ὁ βαρβαρὸς λέγει, καὶ
ὁ ἡγεράτης καὶ ὁ δουλεύων, ὁ σοφὸς καὶ
ὁ ἀσοφός. Dif. 1. p. 5.

tion of a God, (f) Though, saith he, there be so much quarrelling, difference and jangling in the World, yet you may see this agreed in all over the Earth, that there is One God, the King and Father of all. This the Greek and the Barbarian both

say, the Islander and the Inhabitant of the Continent, the Wise and the Unwise alike. Aristotle saith, (g) That all Men have a Pre-notion concerning the Gods, even both Greeks and Barbarians. And in another place, he hath a very re-

(g) Πάντες οὖν ἄνθρωποι καὶ Θεῶν
ἔχουσιν συνέληψιν — Βάρβαροι καὶ Ἑλ-
λῆνες. De Caelo, l. 1. c. 3.

markable passage to this sence, That there is a very Ancient Tradition (which our Fore-fathers have handed down to Posterity, in a Mythological Dress) That there are Gods ; and that the Divine Nature sustains or encom-

passeth all things. But this Tradition, he saith, had, in process of time, some Figments connected with it ; as, that the Gods had Humane Shapes, or those of other Creatures, &c. which if we separate from it, we may suppose it at first divinely spoken and delivered, That the Gods were the First Beings. (h)

καὶ τὴν ἄλλαν φύσιν, &c. Aristot. Metaph. l. 14. c. 8. p. 483. Paris. 1654.

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Many more Testimonies might be produced to prove this Point, that it was the concurrent Opinion, of all the Ancient Heathen Writers, that there was a common Notion or Belief of a Deity in the Minds of Men; But these, I think, are sufficient. And now what can the Atheist say to such a Proof as this? What greater Evidence can be desired of the Truth of any thing, than that it hath been believed by all Men in all Ages and Places of the World? 'Tis a very good way of Arguing from Authority, that *Aristotle* uses in his *Topicks*. That, saith he, which seems true to *some Wise Men*, ought to appear a little probable; what *most Wise Men* believe, is yet further probable; and what *most Men*, both *Wise* and *Unwise* do agree in, is much more probable yet; But what is received as Truth by the *general consent* of all Mankind in all Ages of the World, hath certainly the highest degree of Evidence, of this Kind, that is possible. And what hath such a Testimony, 'tis intolerable Arrogance and Folly for any Men to deny; and to set up their single Judgments and Opinion contrary to the common Suffrage of all Mankind. But they are so puff'd up with Pride and Vanity, that they do not see the Weakness and Precariousness of what they advance, nor how inconsistent it is with their other Tenets. If it have but the appearance of contradicting the received Notion that we have of a God, and if it do but seem never so little to Undermine Religion, they will set it up at a venture as a Demonstration, and stick to it, let it be never so inconsistent with what at other times they deliver. Thus sometimes they will assert, that there is no Universal Idea or
Notion

Notion of a God. At other times they will grant there is *such an One*, but that it was Coined and Invented by some Cunning Politician a long while ago, before any Books or Histories were written, and by him communicated by Tradition to Posterity. But here they do not consider that this will necessarily derive all Mankind from one common Parent : which is a thing they will, at another time, by no means admit of, lest it should seem to countenance the Story of *Adam* or *Noah* : which is said to be *nothing but an old Jewish Tradition*. And that 'tis impossible to account for the Peopling of *America* and *All Islands* remote from the Continent, without supposing their Inhabitants to be *Aborigines*, and to spring out of the Earth like Mushrooms. And then, to account for the General Notion, that they cannot deny, these *Aborigines* have of a God; as before they made *One Wise Man* Invent it, now they will suppose it to be done by a *Hundred* such Cunning Politicians : who, though in different Places and Ages of the World, yet did all light by chance on the very same Notion of a God, and Abuse and Cheat Mankind just after the same manner; and though this be the most extravagant and ridiculous Assertion that ever can possibly come into the Mind of Man, as well as contradictory to the former, yet 'tis all one for that; this, or any thing else, shall be supposed rather than they will yield to the Conviction of Truth, and allow the Notion of a Deity to have a real Foundation. But 'tis no wonder to find Men that wilfully shut their Eyes against the clearest Light, to go forward and backward, and often times run against each other in the dark Mazes of Error : those must

must needs be at a Loss who neglect His Guidance, *who is the Way, the Truth and the Light, and that Spirit which would lead them into all Truth*; and those, no doubt, may easily miss of the true Knowledge of God, who are resolv'd they *will not seek after Him, and all whose Thoughts are, that there is no God.*

F I N I S.

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